

# Remarks by Council President Steve Silverman on Veterans' Day

November 8, Rockville, Maryland

Monday, November 11 is Veterans Day, but it was initially called Armistice Day.

That was the day – on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour in 1918 -- that the guns fell silent in what was then known as the Great World War.

Over two million Americans fought in that conflict. Fewer than 2,000 are alive today.

And, of course, there were conflicts still to come. Another World War, Korea, Vietnam, operations in Grenada, Panama and Bosnia, and the Gulf War.

General Robert E. Lee, surveying the doomed Union advances at the battle of Fredericksburg, remarked: "It is good that war is so terrible, lest we should grow too fond of it."

Any of the folks here who have ever served, as my father did, will tell you there's precious little glory in war. There's tedium. There's waste – of people and resources. There's danger. There's human loss – the loss of friends and comrades and loved ones.

War is an evil and no one knows it more than those whose lives have been caught up in it.

Still, it is a necessary evil so long as innocent lives are threatened by those who would resort to violence to achieve their ends.

Some of our nation's conflicts were classic good-versus-evil events. Others were mistakes or worse, foisted on our servicepeople by policymakers who would not turn up on the lists of the dead and lame.

Whatever the case, our servicemen and women – whether in the Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy, or Coast Guard – have responded to their country's call. Some have given all. All have given some. We pay tribute to those who have gone on, and to those who remain, today.

At the Korean War Memorial on the Mall, an engraving pays tribute to those who fought – and I quote – "for a land they never knew and a people they never met."

There's a word for that. The word is duty. It is an old-fashioned word. But it has lasted from the beginning of time.

It was with Washington at Valley Forge and Grant at Shiloh, with Nimitz at the Battle of Midway and the Marines at the Chosin Reservoir. It was in the cockpit over Bosnia and with the tank corps in southern Iraq.

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, remembering his Civil War service as an old man, remarked that "in our youths, we were touched by fire."

Today, we salute all Montgomery Countians – and all Americans – who have been "touched by fire" in the service of our country. We cannot begin to say "thank you" enough.